

**Testimony of Kurt Brauer**  
**On behalf of**  
**Trout Unlimited and the**  
**The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited**

Good afternoon. My name is Kurt Brauer, and I am the Chair of the Natural Resources Management and Conservation Advocacy Committee of the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited. I am testifying today on behalf of the Michigan Council's 24 local chapters and over 7,500 individual members, as well as the over 140,000 members of Trout Unlimited from across the Nation. Since 1959, Trout Unlimited has worked to conserve, protect, and restore native and naturalized populations of Trout and Salmon, and the watersheds upon which these economically important and beautiful sport fish depend.

I always approach the topic of exotic, invasive species with some trepidation. This is because two of the four Trout species prevalent in Michigan today are introduced aquatic exotic species, and many of the members of our organization have an inordinate affection for them. The Brown Trout and the Rainbow Trout were introduced to Michigan at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century from Europe and the Pacific Northwest respectively in an effort by early conservation officials to establish sport fisheries in heavily degraded environments.

There are other well know exotics which have acclimated themselves to and impacted our region. Infamous new residents such as the sea lamprey, the zebra mussel, and the Asian Big Head Carp. Sometimes referred to as Nuisance Aquatic Species, our organization prefers a more descriptive term, biological pollutants.

The important part of this introduction is to recognize that while many adjectives such as beautiful, productive, and even regenerative can accurately be applied to the aquatic ecosystems of the Great Lakes, there are other adjectives which are applied on a regular basis, such as pristine, which while compelling, are simply inaccurate and misleading.

The aquatic ecosystems of our region are heavily impacted systems which can and should be actively managed to achieve a variety of recreational, economic, and societal goals, and this is where the challenge with biological pollutants comes in. Once in the system, they are almost impossible to manage.

With toxics and other non-living pollutants, once you control their source, there is a real ability to remove them from or encapsulate them in the environment. While sometimes expensive, a 95% or greater "clean-up" is possible. Clean up 95% percent of a biological pollutant and they grow back, you accomplish nothing.

This means that the only appropriate and effective management strategy for these biological pollutants is to control their vectors of introduction and transport. The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited has two policy positions related to this issue. The first is:

**Exotic Species:** The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited supports passage of legislation to prevent the importation of exotic species in ship ballast water and other means.

The second falls under the heading of coldwater habitat restoration may be initially a little less obvious:

MCTU supports the modification and removal of dams as part of a comprehensive river restoration effort however; MCTU does not support the removal of the first barrier to fish passage upstream from the Great Lakes.

This policy position is actually very pragmatic in that while dams do very bad things to the hydrology and thermal regimes of streams, they very effectively protect our streams from many of the undesirable biological pollutants currently resident in the Great Lakes.

On the National level, our parent organization is actively involved in issues related to the management of undesirable exotic aquatic species. As a side note, it may surprise you to learn that the Lake Trout, an important native species of the Great Lakes region, while almost eradicated here by the Sea Lamprey, is an introduced exotic in Yellowstone Lake which threatens the survival of the native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. This puts Trout Unlimited in the unique position of advocating for the restoration in one location and the eradication in another location of the same species of fish.

Trout Unlimited's national policy related to exotic invasive aquatic species is as follows:

**Invasive Species Management (Tier 1)**

**Objective:** Prevent and minimize harmful impacts of nuisance invasive species on salmonids. Programs and projects include eradication of selected nonnative western trout to restore native trout, and reducing the impacts of whirling disease on native and wild trout.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions.